

# Six-String All-In-One

## Warren Guitars Classic II

Given only a superficial glance, Warren Guitars' Classic II model looks like (yet another) axe inspired by the indomitable Fender Stratocaster. You know, the type of "copy" predominant in today's market?

But look a bit closer and you'll see that this one has a few tricks under its pickguard...

Even before plugging in the Classic II, it's obvious this is an extremely resonant guitar with a nice high-end ring. Warren's woods are kiln-dried using a five-stage process where it is constantly monitored for moisture content. That resonance, the company says, can be credited to careful selection of tone woods, its stainless-steel neckplate screws, and the precise fit and finish of its components. And it certainly doesn't hurt that the two-piece Alder body has gorgeous two-tone sunburst finish that gives it a true vintage vibe.

The guitar's maple neck has a slightly enlarged C profile reminiscent of a '60s Stratocaster, with a nicely rolled edge and a 12"-radius dark rosewood fretboard. The neck is very comfortable, even with its larger profile. It sports a tinted high-gloss polyurethane finish, clay dot markers, Schaller locking tuners, and a neatly cut Tusq nut. The flatter fretboard radius allows for low string action, while the rolled edge gives the neck a broken-in feel. The medium frets on our tester were perfectly leveled, highly polished, and meticulously finished.

The Classic II is equipped with a custom tremolo bridge with steel saddles, steel block, and a heavy PRS-type plate with a pop-in tremolo arm. The top plate is flush with the body, so the player can rest a hand on it without pulling it sharp, or de-tune without having to touch up the other strings. It also aids the guitar's sustain. The combination of the locking tuners and the meticulous milling of the tremolo parts allows for heavy use of the trem, including divebombing, and it returns to perfect tune every time. In terms of tuning stability the unit rivals some locking-nut systems, but with a smoother, easier feel and none of the locking nut hassles – very impressive.

But if there's one thing that truly separates the all-U.S.-made Classic II from other Stratocaster-inspired guitars, it's the advanced passive electronics. The Volume control acts as a master volume that maintains clarity and high-end response as it gets rolled back, and its push/pull feature

activates the neck pickup for the renowned neck-and-bridge Tele sound. The middle control is a uniquely voiced master Tone. Set at the midpoint, it's neutral, and as the player rolls it up to 10, it adds midrange. Rolled down from the midpoint, it thins out midrange. The third pot controls a passive high-end roll-off with a push/pull that activates the selector's positions two and four in series (instead of parallel) for fatter, humbucker-like sounds.

We tested the Classic II's electric tones through several amps – a 1967 Fender Bandmaster head with an open-back 2x12" cab loaded with Tone Tubby speakers; a Carvin Bel Air 2x12" combo, and a Crate BV120 head with Celestion-loaded 4x12" cabinet.

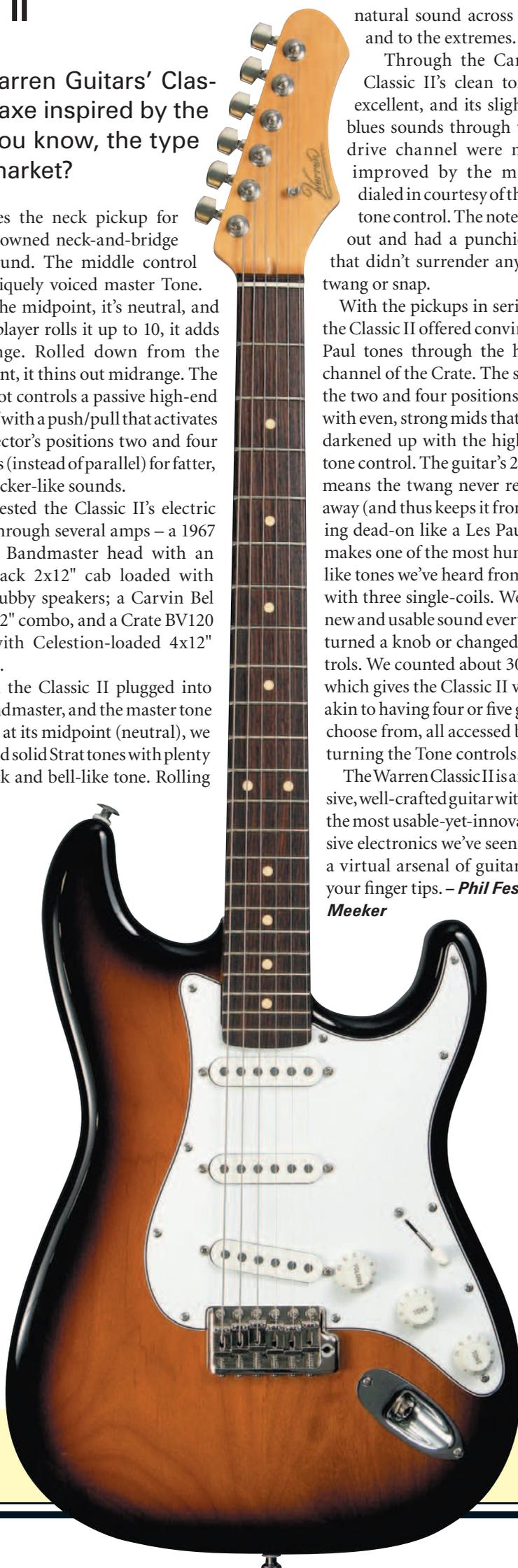
With the Classic II plugged into the Bandmaster, and the master tone control at its midpoint (neutral), we achieved solid Strat tones with plenty of quack and bell-like tone. Rolling

the Tone control to 8 fattened it up with punchy mids and an SRV bite on the highs. Rolling the Tone back produced a thinner, swampier, Robert Cray/Buddy Guy-like tone. The Tone control has a very natural sound across its range and to the extremes.

Through the Carvin, the Classic II's clean tones were excellent, and its slightly dirty blues sounds through the overdrive channel were markedly improved by the mid-boost dialed in courtesy of the middle tone control. The notes jumped out and had a punchier sound that didn't surrender any of their twang or snap.

With the pickups in series mode, the Classic II offered convincing Les Paul tones through the high-gain channel of the Crate. The sounds in the two and four positions were fat, with even, strong mids that could be darkened up with the high-roll-off tone control. The guitar's 25.5" scale means the twang never really goes away (and thus keeps it from sounding dead-on like a Les Paul), but it makes one of the most humbucker-like tones we've heard from a guitar with three single-coils. We found a new and usable sound every time we turned a knob or changed the controls. We counted about 30 sounds, which gives the Classic II versatility akin to having four or five guitars to choose from, all accessed by simply turning the Tone controls.

The Warren Classic II is an impressive, well-crafted guitar with some of the most usable-yet-innovative passive electronics we've seen, offering a virtual arsenal of guitar tones at your finger tips. – *Phil Feser/Ward Meeker*



GEARIN'

UP

### CARL MARTIN VINTAGE SERIES

Carl Martin's Vintage Series pedals combine funky looks with vintage tones. The Crush Zone is a high-gain/distortion box, the Surf Trem tremolo has controls for Speed and Depth, and the Red Repeat provides 600 milliseconds of delay and a simply controlled echo. Learn more at [carlmartin.com](http://carlmartin.com).



### DIGITECH EX-7

Digitech's EX-7 Expression Factory models seven of the the company's previous expression pedals, plus seven distortion stompbox models in a single package. Visit [digitech.com](http://digitech.com).



### SIX NEW EPIS

Epiphone's ES-175 reissue has a laminated maple top, mahogany body, and pair of Alnico Classic humbuckers. The new Firebird gets Epi's Worn Studio treatment, with aged finish, while the Les Paul Standard Plain Top has a maple top, set mahogany neck, and Alnico Classic humbuckers. The Les Paul Special Bass has a solid mahogany body and glued-in maple neck, with two Alnico bass humbuckers, and 34" scale length. The New Masterbilt EF-500RCC fingerstyle model has a solid rosewood body with solid cedar top and L.R. Baggs piezo pickup. The MB-100 is a five-string banjo with no resonator. To learn more, visit [epiphone.com](http://epiphone.com).



### FRANTONE BASSWEET

Frantone's Bassweet pedal uses a germanium transistor to add sustain, compression, and an expanded bass contour. It uses true-bypass switching, Switchcraft jacks, hard-mounted PCB, teflon hook-up wire, and a highly stylized look. For more, go to [frantone.com](http://frantone.com).



### GIBSON SJ SERIES

Gibson's SJ-150 has a natural-finished maple body and neck, and is equipped with a piezo pickup. The SJ-200 EC piezo and SJ-300 each have abalone rosetta and crown inlay, Indian rosewood body, mahogany neck, ebony



Price: \$2,700

Contact: Phone (518)237-8663;  
[warrenguitars.com](http://warrenguitars.com).